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SUBJECT: HELPING ROYG COPE WITH SOMALI REFUGEES AND AN
UPDATE ON PALESTINIANS IN IRAQ

REF: FRANCHESCHI - HOOD EMAIL 03/27

[11](#). (U) This is an action request for the Department. Please see paragraph four.

[12](#). (U/NF) In mid-March, UN Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees Erika Feller visited Yemen to underscore the need for additional resources to cope with the continuing influx of refugees from the Horn of Africa to Yemen. The A/HCR met with senior ROYG officials, including the FM, Deputy FM, MinInt and the Minister of Human Rights among others. She stressed the need for the ROYG to abide by its commitments as a signatory to the Convention on Refugees as well as the possibility of implementing a plan originally utilized by UNHCR to cope with North Africa migration to Southern Europe.

[13](#). (U/NF) Post believes that targeted assistance could provide a significant boost to Yemen's efforts at absorbing migrants from the Horn of Africa. Assistance geared toward training a corps within the Ministry of Interior to become capable of conducting refugee status determinations would help Yemen create a system for distinguishing between legitimate refugees from economic migrants, instead of the current de facto policy of accepting all Somalis on a prima facie basis and rejecting most non-Somalis out of hand. UNHCR-Sanaa has expressed strong support for this concept. Additionally, Post believes that the provision of certain equipment to the Yemen Coast Guard, such as rigid-hull inflatable boats, would substantially boost their capability of interdicting smuggling vessels and conducting surveillance along the coast.

[14](#). (U/NF) ACTION REQUEST: We encourage the Department to consult with UNHCR Geneva on the proposal outline in paragraph three, including a cost estimate and a notional timetable for implementation.

[15](#). (U/NF) On an unrelated refugee issue, on March 28, a private human rights activist met with PolChief to discuss a plan for resettling an estimated 15,000 Palestinian refugees from Iraq, with Yemen serving as a way-station en route to final resettlement in South America or Europe. The activist noted a positive initial reaction from her ROYG interlocutors for the plan. Separately, UNHCR stated that the ROYG planned to unveil an initiative to host Palestinian refugees from Iraq at the Arab League Summit in Riyadh in an effort to garner additional pledges of financial assistance. Upon his return from Riyadh, the FM told Charge on April 1 that the notion of accepting Palestinian refugees from Iraq in Yemen would "not be considered at this stage." He added that the ROYG had instead joined an Arab League consensus to pressure the Government of Iraq to provide better protection to the Palestinians in that country.

